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REPRESENTATIVE DRIEHAUS PUSHES TO PRESERVE FEMA GRANTS FOR CINCINNATI POLICE

Driehaus Cosponsors Legislation to Restore Funding to Local Law Enforcement

WASHINGTON, DC—Representative Steve Driehaus has called on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to reverse a recent policy decision that would restrict grant funding to the Cincinnati Police Department and local law enforcement agencies across the country. In a letter to FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate, Rep. Driehaus underscored that this action could undermine local law enforcement's emergency preparedness and place an excessive burden on law enforcement agencies and communities.

Representative Driehaus also announced that he will cosponsor the Strengthening and Updating Resources and Equipment Act (SURE Act) of 2009, which was introduced by Rep. Mary Jo Kilroy (D-OH) and which would reverse the FEMA policy.

“We need to make sure that local law enforcement has the resources to maintain public safety and ensure preparedness in the event of an emergency. FEMA’s action could deprive the Cincinnati Police Department and its regional partners of critical tools needed to protect our communities, and I urge the administrator to reconsider this policy,” said Rep. Driehaus.

The Department of Homeland Security established the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP) and the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) in 2002 to purchase homeland security equipment. Since that time, FEMA has allowed state and local governments to use annual SHSGP and UASI funding to maintain equipment that was purchased in prior fiscal years. On September 22, 2009, FEMA announced a policy decision that would disallow the use of grant funding for maintenance and sustainment costs for homeland security equipment. If implemented, this policy could place a huge burden on state and local law enforcement.

Text of Rep. Driehaus’s letter to Administrator Fugate follows.

The Honorable Craig Fugate

Administrator

Federal Emergency Management Agency

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

500 C Street, NW

Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate:

It is my understanding that the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Grant Programs Directorate issued a policy change concerning the use of preparedness grants for maintenance and sustainment costs for homeland security equipment on September 22, 2001. This decision will place an undue burden on state, local and tribal law enforcement partners and, if implemented, could compromise public safety. I respectfully request that you reverse this action.

Robust federal preparedness grants have been greatly successful with state and local governments following the events of September 11, 2001. Having served in the Ohio House of Representatives for eight years, I can attest that local and state efforts financed through these grants not only have brought about a more cohesive law enforcement network but also have increased the safety of our communities. This would not have been possible without these grant opportunities.

It is clear that the Federal Emergency Management Agency remains dedicated to providing its state and local partners with funding opportunities that will allow them to meet the needs of their various jurisdictions. However, as a member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, I view the new policy of shifting the responsibility of maintenance and sustainment costs as one that will result in wasted investments and an unnecessary burden on law enforcement agencies and local tax payers. This is exactly why legislators clearly expressed that Urban Area Security Initiative and State Homeland Security Grant Program financing would be used for the "purchasing, upgrading, storing, or maintenance of equipment, including computer hardware and software." This policy violates the Congressional intent of the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, P.L. 110-53.

As a result of this policy, numerous programs in several cities / jurisdictions will be impacted severely within the First Congressional District of Ohio. Proven technology, such as the Southern Ohio, Southeastern Indiana, and Northern Kentucky License Plate Recognition Project would be terminated. This initiative, which includes 12 counties and over 200 law enforcement jurisdictions, represents the quintessential information sharing relationship that the Department of Homeland Security seeks to support. Yet, with the implementation of this new policy, more than \$700,000 of grant funding and \$3.1 million which had been pledged for full regional implementation can no longer be leveraged to maximize public safety at the level once intended. The City of Cincinnati and its regional partners are not alone in this predicament. Undoubtedly, law enforcement agencies across the United States will observe negative impacts as a result of this policy change.

Again, I respectfully request that, out of concern for prior investments and the safety of our communities, you reverse your policy regarding the use of preparedness grants for funding maintenance and sustainment costs for homeland security equipment.

Sincerely,

Steve Driehaus

Member of Congress

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